2 January 1976

Dear Harold:

This responds to your note of Dec. 26 regarding editorial assistance on the condensation of the Whitewash series, and, regretfully, the answer has to be the same as before, and for much the same reasons. I think for one thing that it's a serious defect that I have no experience whatever in preparing books, and in this sense I do think in a good many ways you would be better off with with an experienced book editor -- although I understand your feelings about anyone who doesn't know the field.

From my own standpoint the biggest difficulty is that I cannot imagine tackling a job of this dimension without being assured of constant and unfailing access to you at all times to discuss whatever needed to be discussed. Even if you did the condensing yourself (which I have the impression you probably don't have time for) and I were assigned merely to do whatever we might agree was worth doing to make it smoother, I still would want such access and ability to refer to you whenever necessary. This would mean literally moving back there for whatever time the job required, which would mean Jenifer's coming along since she doesn't drive and life here is not possible unless one can use a car. There would be other problems connected with the house, the cats, and our own routine which combine to make the whole idea relatively impractical from our standpoint.

I wish I could suggest an alternative, but aside from Howard or Lesar I can think of no one in whom you'd have much reason to feel either trusting or comfortable. I can think of two very capable AP alumni, both also retired, but both had the bad luck to be assigned to important segments of the same story at one time or another. How they actually felt about what they did I have no idea, but I don't see how they could be very happy with it. I doubt if one, Gavzer, whom I think you've run into, would particularly care. The other, Sterling Green, a long-time WX staffer, is, in my opinion, more solid, although less flashy as a writer. I think it was Sterling who handled Hoover's initial massive leaks before the Warren Commission got going. I have no idea what either is doing now, or whether either is available. I mention them merely as a matter of possible interest in case the project becomes more urgent and you really have to start looking. I have the address of both if you need either. I've barely met Gavzer, and there's no reason to think he'd remember me. Sterling I do know fairly well, since WW II days in WX, and have seen him a couple of times since when we both picked up naturally with no sense of any change in the other.

FYI, I've finished the main part of MP and now am ploughing through the appendices. The book is everything you say about it and demolishes the WR utterly. Unfortunately the physical layout is hard on my eyes, and I've had to take it in small doses because of them. This despite new glasses which vary little from my last prescription. I just get tired sooner now when I do much reading, and by the time I work over the newspapers I don't have too much reading power left.

Otherwise we're both fine, feel great, have no complaints, eat with the usual gusto and are trying to scale down our routine to the point where we can begin seeing some other people now and then. Jenifer has pared down her chronology to the point where she's keeping faithful track only of our GL, his various moves toward resurrection, and peripheral matters. When our current subscription to the Post runs out in March we hope not to renew, as part of this general tapering off. However we both feel that as Ford becomes more unpopular and desperate there will be every possibility of another Mayaguez incident to get the country back on something resembling a war footing again. The surge of the stock market as the year ended, merely on the strngth of our thus far minor involvement in Angola, is a very bad sign and suggests the familiar combination of pressures which will beset an unpopular administration in an election year.

So the hope of scaling our efforts here down to more livable dimensions are not too bright, but we hope to try. In any case it won't be easy. If not another Mayaguez and the revival of a war psychology to mobilize public opinion and support, there will be other things. For instance, our friends in Tucson currently are investigating a total of 11 cases where people have been abducted by UFOs and returned with no conscious memory of what went on. If and when these cases are investigated and researched as they should be with the aid of hypnosis to obtain subconscious recall, there well could be another crisis in public confidence and awareness, but of a vastly different and potentially more explosive sort. Small wonder if the Dept. of Disinformation -- assuming it knows about these cases, as it probably does -- certainly does in at least one case -- seeks to cover its bets by allowing characters like the Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and The Two to operate without restraint, testing, in effect, the climate for a new all-purpose religious movement which could, if desired, be turned toward political ends. If you can't run the country with modern methods, try the oldest device in the book -- religion.

Sorry,again, about having to discourage you about the condensation project, but I just don't see how it would work out, as far as we are concerned. Otherwise, it seems promising: if you're correct in your estimate that now is the time, it may not take too long for some publisher to understand this; in that case, let him worry about providing the help needed. The only thingyou have to worry about is controlling the situation. At a minimum, let Lesar draw up the contract, with the publisher paying for everything, If you're right, he will.

Here's hoping you're continuing to feel better and keep on top.

Best from us both,

jdw

Almost forgot -- thanks very much indeed for the McDonald book and the committee report on plots. We appreciate your thought very much indeed, and may even get around to reading them some day.